

The Labour Organiser

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KITES

We have lately been blessed with what our armchair warriors and newspaper fire-eaters term "a lull." It has corresponded somewhat to the "silly season," known to all editors as the time when news is scarce and the public can be stuffed with tales of giant gooseberries or fobbed off with discussions on such subjects as "Why Marry?" or "Was Gertie good or goosey?"

So the "lull" has been used to fly a few kites, and doubtless those flying them have taken the direction of the wind. At least, we hope so in respect, at any rate, to the kites about co-operation with Labour after the war, the three years' truce proposal, and the suggestion for an election immediately at the close of the war; that one too about a return to the Party system when the war is over.

Some of these were quite nice kites, but they were badly flown. And, anyway, any boy will tell you that kite-flying time is when the winds of March are here. We suggest that some of the kite-flying ought to wait a little longer; the spring offensive is not far off, and we shall know the answers better after that.

* * *

We write because we want the great Labour Movement not to make up its mind yet upon any of the subjects the kite-flyers have sought to get premature decision or inclination upon.

Take first that question of a General Election immediately after the war. Much attention has been attracted to a

quotation from a Tory warning to its constituency organisation as follows:

"When the war ends in victory over the forces of Nazidom, it is almost certain that the country will be faced, practically at once, with a General Election of paramount importance."

A bit of wishful thinking this. But note the similarity of wording to that of Sinclair's premature and ill-worded promise of restoration of rights after the war. What if there is no victory? Is the election to come just the same?

Let us make our own position clear. This journal holds that a General Election should take place **as soon as conditions are suitable**, for a democratic verdict to be given by the electors as a whole—and this implies the possibility of an election **during** the war if conditions allow. We hold, too, that the Labour Party should **now** be studying the position and possibilities with a view to adopting proposals that would make an election possible even in extreme and emergency conditions.

* * *

BUT—and there are several buts—we deny that an election "practically at once," after victory, complies with our conditions. Read our preceding paragraph again. Are conditions likely to be suitable at such a juncture except to one section or person anxious to cash in before the bank breaks? Consider the probable military and naval dispositions at such an hour. The embarrassment of new world-wide and pressing obligations and problems. Indeed, such an hour would probably

prove the most futile and frustratory of all.

But why commit ourselves as one Labour writer has done to a date six months after the war (presumably he means armistice or the cessation of hostilities); or, as some suggest, to when we have settled accounts in the Coalition and each Party has handed back the other its sword; or again, as possibly Churchill would like, till after or during a continued truce.

Labour should wait events. These may well be startling enough to upset many calculations. What is more, does nobody ever contemplate the possibility that a Labour Premier may yet preside over a War Cabinet and in due course require a majority and mandate from the people? These are times of rapid change, and it seems futile to discuss the future in terms of the present.

Let us then put aside the batch of cuttings on this subject which we have collected from various papers, and say, "Wait! the hour for decision is not yet, nor must we commit ourselves—but, be ready."

* * *

There is that kite also about an after-the-war truce, a question sometimes propounded with a convenient forgetfulness that there is no truce now in the sense used, and that an electoral truce such as exists is no absolute bar to a continuation of after-the-war collaboration.

When Labour entered the Government, with the full assent of its Conference, it was to do a particular job. And though many may have had doubts about how and when the job might end nobody saw fit to enquire about the position then. What "notice" was required on either side, if any? And who was to decide when the job was over? Did the job end when the roof was on, when the opening ceremony took place, or when the carters had cleared away the debris? And if an extension of the plan was desired, what then?

Well these are questions that are troubling some folk—the kite-flyers—now, even before the job is half-way through.

Let Labour wait before it makes up its mind on these matters. To some extent the same considerations apply as to our attitude to an election date. The future is chockful of problems and possibilities, and (apart from its

National obligations), the prime concern of the Labour Party is to preserve its own existence, vigour and independence as a means for the creation of the Socialist State. The Party may well crack up by continuing, overlong, an alliance with those who go a different way; and equally it may find itself in the wilderness through parting company too soon, and leaving to the other the road, the coach and the destination. Happily the day for decision is not now.

We put these considerations before our readers because the coming days will be full of perplexities, and we must think clearly. We should leave to-day's kites for boys to play with, while we concentrate on sterner tasks. But as events shape themselves we must remember our duties to ourselves, our Party and our Cause. The ambitions of men must not deflect us any more than the mutterings of those who when great decisions have to be taken would have us leave the substance for the shadow. Pray Heaven it will be ours to choose!

CANDIDATURES

New Endorsements:—

WEST RENFREWSHIRE: Mr. J. S. Clarke,
2 Walmer Crescent, Ibrox, Glasgow
(Co-op.).

Withdrawals:—

BUCKS. (South): Dr. Whitfield;
DEVON (Drake, Plymouth): Mr. L. W. Matters; KENT (Bromley): Mr. Percy Arnold; MIDDX. (Twickenham): Mr. W. Davies-Lloyd.

Calendars — A Correction

We made reference in our last issue to the receipt of a calendar from Hull. Inadvertently we attributed the calendar to North-West Hull instead of Central Hull. Agent, Coun. E. G. Carr.

We have also received a blotter calendar from Newport. Agent, Mr. R. Ley. This was sent out with the greetings and good wishes of the Candidate, Mr. Peter Freeman.

Readers are reminded that the Women's Department of the Labour Party still carries on at Transport House. We need hardly say that war-time conditions have immensely increased the work of this Department, and correspondence on women's organisation should be addressed as stated.

LABOUR PARTY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The fortieth Annual Conference of the Labour Party will take place—if it is at all possible.

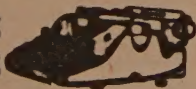
Notices have been sent to Affiliated Organisations convening a three days' Conference for June 2nd to June 4th, inclusive. This covers a period which was found quite adequate last year at Bournemouth.

The venue of the Conference has not yet been fixed but we profoundly hope that some central place can yet be found which will not involve excessive travelling on either the northern or southern parts of the Movement. As things stand there are places at which Conferences have been held in the past which today would entail two days' travelling both at the commencement and end of the Conference. We trust this can be avoided by the discovery of a compromise centre.

This year's Conference will devote itself to the report of the National E.C. (including financial statement), the report of the Parliamentary Party and to N.E.C. Memorandums, (a) on the immediate war situation and (b) on peace issues and reconstruction. Resolutions are not being invited from Affiliated Organisations.

The last day for N.E.C. nominations is April 18th, and for the appointment of delegates May 16th.

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THE WANDERLUST

A famous M.P. writes:—

"... an excellent story. I had to read it all through half-dressed and shivering, but unable to proceed till finished!"

YOUTH

Conditions have been difficult latterly for all Youth Organisations, but throughout the country quite a number of Youth sections continue to function, although for obvious reasons the National Organisation of Youth has had to be slowed down, and Youth's own paper "The Socialist" suspended. There is no intention of losing existing organisations or of giving anything but encouragement to Youth to function.

A circular just sent out by Head Office draws the attention of D.L.P.'s to the encouragement and approval that should be given to Youth Organisations which are functioning in accordance with Party rules. To further the object in view a census is being taken of those branches of the League of Youth which are continuing their activities.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor,

The Loss to Southwark

At the last meeting of the City of Bradford Labour Party, attention was drawn to the report in the "Labour Organiser" of the tragedy at North Southwark, where a whole Ward committee of the Party was wiped out whilst on A.R.P. duty.

Although we had our own little troubles caused through the interference of Hitler with our plans, we were shocked at the calamity which had befallen our comrades.

I was instructed, through the medium of the "L.O." to tender to the relatives and friends of the lost comrades, the deepest and most sincere sympathy of the Bradford Movement.

To all those other comrades at Coventry, Birmingham, Cardiff, Southampton, the Greater London area, and wherever the enemy has cast his foul messengers of death and destruction, we extend our sincerest sympathy, and we trust that when this era of carnage is ended, we shall all emerge ready to grapple to the bitter end with the vast post-war problems that will face us.

Courage, Brothers, the future is ours.

Yours fraternally,

W. V. TITHERINGTON,
Secretary.

Reviews

“Forever Freedom”—by Josiah C. Wedgwood and Alan Nevins—Pelican books. 6d.

It has truly been said that truth is the first casualty in war. It can be said with equal truth that freedom and liberty are the second. Hence the need for discussion and study of this subject at the present day.

But what is freedom? Does Socialism tend towards it? Josiah Wedgwood hardly thinks so and as the State grows more powerful there are other Socialists who have their doubts, though we calm our fears, as is pointed out in the introduction of this little book, by claiming that Socialism is only a stage to the full and free expression of the individual and to a stage of society where “true freedom,” whatever that is, can exist and flourish. Not very clear is it?

Therefore the authors give us an anthology of freedom—a delightful compilation in subject chronological order of what has been written both in this country and America by many writers, both in prose and poetry, in espousal, explanation and laudation of liberty. And the mistakes that men make over this matter is well illustrated by the inclusion of “Rule Britannia.” What freedom, we ask, is there for other peoples when *one Nation* rules the waves?

It is just here however that one perceives the value of this collection as a study in freedom itself. Ideas on freedom differ, and never before have we been able to see quite so clearly how man’s yearning for a world-wide freedom that will hurt no man differs in concept from one Nation to another, one time to another and one man to another. One must read “Forever Freedom” not for mere enjoyment but as a study of an abstruse but glorious aspiration and of the human mind itself seeking for liberation.

Finer reading than anything included in the anthology is Josiah Wedgwood’s own introduction to the subject. We enjoyed this immensely. It is perhaps the best thing that has been written of the ethics of freedom. We commend it to all our readers.

Let us add that this little book might well be used as an educational primer in schools and colleges. The

authors would make the prophets of liberty as familiar as is the Bible, and should not this be so? Indeed we shall need that it be so if freedom is to be built and safeguarded and extended to all peoples.

The Blitz

We learn unofficially that the Labour Party are contemplating a scheme by which blitzed parties may be assisted to restart by means of a money grant for the purpose of replacing lost equipment, such grant being limited to a reasonable maximum, and intended, not for the purpose of completely refurnishing or of compensating for damaged buildings, but to provide the real essentials in equipment for getting down to work again.

We gather that the scheme will be operated out of the By-Election Insurance Fund and as there is little doubt that the list of applications is likely to grow it is really imperative that parties should maintain their payments to the fund. By-election expenditure is by no means finished with, but the diversion of a portion of the fund to this most essential work of first aid will be welcomed by every party. No one knows whose turn will come next.

The following does not pretend to be a complete list of Labour offices which have been blitzed up to date. It is sufficiently large, however, to show that a large sum of money is needed to place these parties on their feet again.

The blitzed parties are:—Bradford, Middlesbrough, Sheffield, Manchester, Coventry, Yardley, Southampton, Hendon, West Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Brixton, East & West Fulham, North Battersea, Streatham, South East & South West St. Pancras, Shoreditch, Westminster and Bristol Borough.

Staff Changes

Mr. John Huddleston has relinquished the office of Youth Officer on taking up an appointment with the Ministry of Labour.

Mrs. A. E. Spivey has relinquished the agency at Nuneaton.

Up to the time of going to press we understand the advertised vacancy at Clitheroe has not yet been filled.

Around the Local Parties

A useful service has been introduced by the North Tottenham Labour and Co-operative Joint Committee (Agent and Secretary, Mr. A. G. Rainbird). A registry of documents has been placed at the disposal of members with a view to avoiding certain loss and confusion which has arisen for many persons after a blitz. There have been no end of cases of important family documents having been lost or destroyed and the registry is designed to secure not so much the safety of the documents as particulars concerning them so that duplicates or necessary information shall be immediately available in case of their destruction. The documents referred to are insurance policies, ration books, pension books, saving certificates, savings bank books, registration books, etc., and working-class families are not apt to themselves place in safety particulars of these sort of things. We understand that this service has been well taken up and needless to say absolute secrecy is observed as to the contents.

Nothing daunted by the wicked fate which befell their Party offices and much of their fine membership as a result of enemy action, the West Bermondsey Labour Party has got going again. The West Bermondsey bulletin, duplicated, is the token of fresh activity. The bulletin records the thanks of the Party to the Political Purposes Committee of the R.A.C.S. for their help in providing a typewriter and duplicator to replace the four typewriters and other office requisites which disappeared in the flames. Though all records, minutes, card indexes and other documents of one of the largest and finest of the Labour Parties in London were completely destroyed, our friends are now able to say that the Party is again functioning though not quite fully. Endeavours are being made to contact members who are still in the area and to send a collector to every one of them. It is a sign of the fine spirit abroad that some members have agreed to pay a subscription of a 1/- a month. We note that the Women's Section has reopened and meetings are being held every week. The Party has issued an

appeal for help and those of our readers who can send anything along should do so. The temporary address of the Party is 5, Brunswick Court, Tanner Street, Bermondsey, S.E.1.

A brave effort is still being made in Hull, and some evidence of this is the fact that the East Hull D.L.P. recently sold 250 copies of Bevin's "War and the Worker" in three days. This Party also distributed 5,000 copies of Attlee's "Peace Aims" which were presented to the Party by George Muff, M.P. The Party has a War Emergency Committee which meets every Wednesday and which dealt with over 800 cases in 1940. "The future, though grim, is looked forward to with confidence," says the Secretary, Mr. M. Harman.

In Central Hull (Secretary and Agent, Mr. E. G. Carr) the Party, despite untold difficulties, practically paid its way during the year. Hull has been hell at certain periods since the war began, and we extend to our comrades there our hearty greetings and sympathy for them in their work.

Halifax Labour Party (Secretary and Agent, Mr. S. E. Barker) tell us that the Party there is in good spirits. Figures taken a month or two ago show that membership has increased by at least 600 and the financial position is sound. The Ward Committees, Women's Section, Ambulance Class, Study Group and Socials Group all meet regularly. Attendance suffers to some extent by war work, and the service of one kind and another rendered in this connection by members, but on the whole the Party, it is stated, is in a very happy position and hopes to be able to maintain this.

A recent note from Nelson and Colne (Agent, Mr. W. J. Throup) tells us that the Party is fortunate in that area so far. Our comrades are busy at the moment with a membership overhaul and this is having very good results. "If they will only leave us alone this year," says the Secretary, "we shall show extremely good results by the end of the year."

Passing to an area of another kind altogether we hear from Poplar that it is very difficult to get collecting done as collectors have either gone away or are too busy on war work. The Secretary and Agent (Ald. George J. Cressall) tells us that when he has gone out to do some collecting it has nearly broken his heart to see the remains of the homes of members. It is invariably difficult to find where members have gone to. Is not this a matter which friends in other parts of the country should be attending to more than they do? Areas which have received evacuees are far from doing all that they can to discover old Party members now evacuated to their areas. What cheering messages could be sent to those who still carry on in the blitzed places if only contacts were made and messages were sent to the home Party!

Another Party in London sends us word of its activities. This is North-East Bethnal Green (Secretary and Agent, Coun. A. G. Tate). Bethnal Green, we gather, has not received quite so much enemy action as other places we have mentioned. The Party

here has concentrated on service to the people and a budget of literature which has reached us shows that every endeavour is being made (by extensive distribution of literature and the display of window bills, etc.) to let the public know the manner in which the Party can help them. There are no less than five J.P.'s including the Agent who are continually at service besides others who give specialised advice. No less than 5000 copies of the "London Citizen" are still being distributed each month.

We note with pleasure that our old friend, Mr. Tom Roper, has been appointed permanent Chairman of the Regional Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Information (North Midland Region). This important appointment is a recognition of Labour's usefulness and of the sterling qualities displayed by Mr. Roper. The Nottingham papers published a résumé of Mr. Roper's public career to which we would add a tribute that under his direction the Nottingham Labour Movement has made uniform and steady progress.

A Co-op. Triumph

One of the new optimists, discussing decorations to be awarded when victory is won, suggested that a special medal be struck for the Co-operative Movement. Four words, he said, would be sufficient: "WE FED SIXTEEN MILLION."

No history of the war can ever do justice to the super-human efforts of the Co-operative Movement, which is helping the nation to victory by catering on the most colossal scale.

The 8,600,000 members and their families have not stayed put since 1939. Greater London has 1½ million co-operative members, many of whom have changed their homes. Some have moved from Bethnal Green to Mayfair, and others to the country.

Large-scale evacuation has taken thousands of co-operators from the south coast, and from industrial areas, to new homes a hundred miles away.

We have continued to feed them. Behind those simple words lies an epic story. Long hours, late hours, Sunday hours.

... But no matter—Britain's co-operative service has delivered the goods.

The movement which has fed half of Britain through unprecedented times has already yielded some 100,000 recruits to the fighting services.

The C.W.S. has £80 million invested with the Government. This huge sum is much higher than the amounts raised by the War Weapons Weeks of the great industrial cities, and represents the savings of co-operative members who invest in their own societies, and in turn with the C.W.S.

From the London News

A thoughtful article on "Party Discipline," by J. Stewart Cook, appears in the February number of the "Reading Citizen." It contains some new thought and considerations on this matter which should well be borne in mind by all concerned, and we hope to quote extensively from the article next month.

Some Reports and Balance Sheets

"In no single part of our organisation have we stopped work." This is the cheering message from West Leyton D.L.P., whose annual report is to hand (Secretary, Mr. H. Underhill). Organisation has been on a war footing with Party matters centred round the E.C. for some months, but a monthly members' meeting has now been inaugurated to take over the functions of ward meetings and the general committee. The experiment has been successful. This Party has both a live M.P. and a live Secretary, and it is not surprising therefore to note that despite all difficulties there is a good year's work to report. The annual meeting has been held and good press reports secured.

The Bradford Labour Party's annual report is outstanding for the fact that the load of debt, and the load also of domestic troubles which beset the Party for so many years, are both now reported to be things of the past. There is indeed a small surplus of assets over liabilities and "for the first time in many years, we have a United Labour Party, awaiting the day when we can try conclusions with our Political Opponents." We should not forget that these achievements are in spite of the fact that the office was completely destroyed by enemy action some months ago. We note that there has been a change of policy on the part of the City Council Labour Group, who now accept chairmanships of committees though this course was frowned upon for several years. Bradford has a Labour Lord Mayor this year. (Secretary and Agent: Mr. W. V. Titherington).

The annual report of the City of Leeds Labour Party says (Secretary, Mr. L. Williams): "A Labour Party exists in each of the six Parliamentary divisions of the city, as well as in each of the twenty-six Wards. In addition, there are seven local Labour Parties functioning in those Wards, which are split between Leeds and county Parliamentary divisions."

There are some large divided boroughs which we regret cannot give such a complete vindication of their Ward work. The financial statement is on the whole really satisfactory. Affiliation fees which stand at £478 odd show a slight reduction on the previous year, which it is up to the prosperous Trade Unions to remedy. The Party finished the year with an increased balance of the satisfactory total of £348 17s. 0½d. We have previously mentioned in the "Labour Organiser" the Leeds special effort fund, which set out to raise £2,000. About a quarter of this sum has been reached so far. We should not omit to mention that the Leeds Labour Party continue to publish the "Leeds Weekly Citizen," a bright and interesting journal which reflects every credit on the Leeds Movement. This is the thirtieth year of its publication—the "L.O.," by the way, is in its twenty-first year.

From its emergency address (the office having been blitzed) the Yardley (Birmingham) D.L.P. issue a cheering report. Despite all the year's difficulties it is surprising to see that the income for 1940 exceeds that of the previous year by over £16. This Party has suffered serious losses in personnel due to enemy action, and there has been much material damage in their area. Despite this, membership has been carefully checked and as far as possible traced. Reports at present show that the position is not so bad, in spite of what might have been expected, bearing in mind the exodus which followed certain eventful nights a month or two ago. Our friends still make new members and they are quite justly proud of that fact. (Secretary and Agent: Mr. R. Belben.)

The annual report of the Huddersfield L.P. (Secretary and Agent: Ald. A. Gardiner) says that "During the year under review, many obstacles to the normal work of the Party have manifested themselves in various ways, such as the 'calling-up' of members of the Party and 'black-out' conditions,

both of which have seriously affected the collecting of membership contributions and attendance at Party and Ward meetings. The war work of members, entailing overtime and night work has also played a detrimental part in Party activities.

In spite of these disabilities the work of the Party has gone on and in the mind of the man in the street Labour's stock is definitely 'up.'

It is interesting to note that despite some trouble with membership, an income of £166 was derived from this source and the Party were able to close the year with an increased cash balance in hand. The Party continue to publish the "Huddersfield Citizen," a paper now in its fourteenth year; but the "Citizen" is finding difficulties which, if the Huddersfield Movement is wise in its day and generation, should be boldly faced. Labour cannot afford to lose any of its local newspapers. These are too few already.

The West Edinburgh D.L.P. is, we believe, the largest Party in the Northern capital, and its activities are always of interest. This time there is shown a loss of membership, but in other directions the Party continues to display vigour and ability. The women of the Party are to be congratulated upon having expended a sum in the region of £100 for the provision of comforts, etc.

Special mention is due for the "Edinburgh Clarion," which sells at one penny and practically pays its own costs. The paper is of exceptional merit and has a circulation far outside Edinburgh. Indeed copies are sold as far south as London and as far north as Aberdeen, not to mention some copies which are sent abroad. The Party has a capital investment in the Keir Hardie Hall now amounting to £433, and this centre of activity is an asset to the whole city. One peculiar fact is mentioned in the Annual Report, namely, that the attendance at general committee meetings during the first six months of the year maintained the usual high standard, but there has been a falling off in the latter part of the year since there was an alteration to Sunday afternoon meetings. We wonder what other parties have had the same experience. (Secretary: Mr. L. O. Robertson.)

The Newport (Mon.) Labour Party has for many years maintained a high membership figure. Last year income from this source reached the sum of £249 2s. 10d. and 1940 appears to have been on the whole a successful financial year, notwithstanding a reduction in turnover. Liabilities are down by £55 and balances have increased by quite £40. An interesting item is the payment to collectors of the sum of £50 10s. 10d. and to sections the sum of £48 14s. 9d. This latter sum was returned by the sections to the central fund, and the Annual Report places on record the Party's thanks for this support. (Agent: Mr. R. H. Ley.)

The report of the Faversham D.L.P. is a brave and worthy document. Right in the line of fire this Division has of course suffered, but only one Party has had to close down, and before doing so the comrades at Teynham handed over their bank balance ready for the time when it is possible to start again. The year closed with a favourable balance, notwithstanding that some £18 was expended on election envelopes. Though one does not know now when these will be used, this asset has certainly gone up considerably in value. The Party celebrated its twenty-first birthday during the year and was able to pay tribute to several old comrades still in the fight.

A highly interesting report is that of the Newburn and District L.L.P. (Wansbeck Division). This Party, we notice, has given greatly of its activities to strengthening the A.F. Services, both by recruiting volunteers, by holding instructional classes, and by developing a street organisation scheme, in addition to raising very substantial funds for stirrup pumps and first aid material. Altogether, 230 stirrup pumps and 280 first aid kits were secured. Six ambulances were also furnished with 28 stretchers and 72 blankets. Preparations are now being made to equip a mobile surgical unit. Altogether over £1,000 was raised for these purposes.

This Party has a Trade Union membership of roughly 2,000 and an individual membership of 544. The ordinary funds of the Party show a bank balance of £173. The Secretary is Mr. Dan Dawson (the Divisional Agent).

Wansbeck D.L.P. also present an interesting report. The affiliated T.U. membership stands at 11,200, 90 per cent. of which is accounted for by the Miners' Association, though we are intrigued to note an affiliation of 34 members from the National Union of Agricultural Workers—bravo! Individual membership stands at 1,193. The financial position is prosperous and cash balances stand at £329, an increase of £77 over the previous year.

The Reading Trades Council and Labour Party present what is probably the most successful report of any Labour Party. We note the following points:—The general council has never failed to meet on its regular nights and several special meetings were held, attendances representative and good; the E.C. met on 26 occasions; Ward association meetings have suffered somewhat, but Ward associations as a whole have been active and form the backbone of the Party; the Women's Organisation has been busy, but have had to substitute cottage meetings owing to losses of meeting-places; the League of Youth, owing to calling-up, has ceased to function; the Council Group function admirably.

There has been a slight fall in membership, but subscriptions have brought in £118 odd. The financial report shows an increased cash balance of nearly £100 and a gross turn-over of £1,707—of which £756 came from dances. These functions have returned a nett profit of no less than £587, more than covering the expenditure on the Party staff which accounted for £474. We are glad to note that the "Reading Citizen" has appeared each month and nearly 3,000 copies of each issue has been sold. The paper practically pays its way. Our readers will join with us in congratulating this extraordinarily vigorous Party and its live Agent, Mr. Claude Denscombe.

There is something heroic about the report from Southampton (Secretary and Agent: Mr. A. Rose). Here is a Party carrying on in the very gates of hell, whose reports, documents and whole demeanour in the face of terrific adversity would do credit to any Party in the country in times of peace. The report is well presented, honest in its admissions as to what the Party has suffered, and notwithstanding this it is a triumph of earnest endeavour and

consistent work. Members' contributions last year reached £203, while draws and bazaars brought in £239. A special war appeal produced £87, and the Party just turned the corner on the year's work. It is true that membership has steadily dropped, but who can wonder when even the Party premises have been damaged several times, and that Southampton has suffered so extensively? The general committee and E.C. has met regularly.

We have a later report dated 17th January giving the position after the heavy raids which took place at the year end. It is not permissible for us to quote extensively, but we ask our readers to consider what the position must be for a Party seeking to maintain itself in a town where now 36,000 people are permanently without houses and another 10,000 probably temporarily so. Lots of Party machinery have disappeared in the general confusion, and it has been impossible to trace secretaries, collectors and members. As to officials the Secretary tabulates as follows:—"Ward secretaries lost 9, retained 5; Women's Section—secretaries lost 5, retained 4; membership secretaries lost 6, retained 8; collectors lost 60, retained 35. One wonders indeed at the tenacity of those who remain to carry on under such circumstances. The tradition of the pioneers of our Movement pale into insignificance beside this example. We predict that the story of Southampton and some other places will live long in the annals of Labour.

Conferences, Public Meetings, Aggregate Members' Meetings, One-day Schools.

The Propaganda Officer at Head Office has done a great deal lately to encourage Parties to hold one or more of the above types of meetings. In addition to the Members of Parliament who have been asked to give their services, Prospective Parliamentary Labour Candidates are being asked to provide Head Office with available dates.

Everyone concerned must assist. Head Office to put some pep into the propaganda drive for Socialist ideas. Speakers will, of course, have as one of their main jobs the explanation of Labour's part in the present Government, and Labour's part in the war.

*By the Editor**The Gipsies*

The Wanderlust

No. 7

"Whoa."

It was Minnie who spoke, and with a jerk the picturesque but ramshackle caravan came to rest on the verge of the common. Another "Whoa," this time a young man's voice, and a second caravan pulled up alongside the other.

It was autumn. Gipsies, scattered far and wide during the summer months, were now on trek to the towns or to winter quarters. Jen or Jan was the young man's name, and though there were several small youngsters, bright-eyed but pinched-looking, in his caravan, and Minnie's mother, and three more youngsters, in the first caravan, he was the only grown-up male.

A spot of bother up-country accounted for this—a lamed game-keeper and an indignant squire, who was also a Magistrate. Jan's father and brother were both "down" for four months, while Minnie's father was for Quarter Sessions and a likely twelve-month sentence.

But Jan knew the ropes. Those coppices over against the edge of the common weren't likely places for keepers, and the farmer near to was careless with his poultry. Supper would be O.K. to-night.

So Jan crept away while Minnie and her mother loosed the horses, gathered the faggots, and made ready the fire, screened as well as may be by the shadow of the caravans, and a canvas stretched on sticks.

It needs skill to catch a rabbit without nets or snare. The burrow must be chosen carefully and then after placing one's jacket on the bolt-hole, Brer rabbit is startled into bolting into the garment by a few careful thrusts down the front hole with a stick.

Jan soon accomplished this trick and the harder one of taking a roosting fowl without noise and without raising a dog-bark.

Jan knew better than to take these trophies back as captured. He killed

and feathered the fowl, leaving traces that the fox would be blamed for. Next he skinned the rabbit, shoved the skin down a hole, and made for "home." Supper that night was fit for a king, a Romany king, anyway, and after nine insides were adequately packed, there yet remained a breakfast for some of them.

* * *

"Play to me, gipsy!" One wouldn't expect to hear this haunting tune at a gipsy fire-side. But the modern gipsy sometimes has a gramophone. Of the two or three records Jan possessed that was his favourite. He put it on, and closed the lid. The sound was subdued and very sweet.

That night was like no other night in Jan's and Minnie's experience. Mother has gone to bed and the kiddies were all asleep—each party huddled in a heap on the floor of their respective caravans.

The fire was hot and there was no wind. Squatted rather than sat on either side of the fire, something stirred in Jan that he had never felt before. Minnie, too, felt his hot gaze, caught the coal-glow of his eyes, and for the first time she saw in him her provider, a face dark and attractive, a figure sinuous and strong—a man—and one for whom she felt a strong rising passion.

And then Jan sang, "Play to me, Gipsy"—at first a low humming, then the words quietly, so as not to wake the others.

Gipsy passions are quick, and they are strong. I believe, moreover, that they are lasting, as we shall see. It wasn't long before Minnie rose. She crossed to the other side of the fire and sat down. She had indeed made up her mind, and Jan knew it as well as she.

You, dear reader, may smile a little at this quick love-making, but perhaps you don't know gipsies. You may imagine as I do that Jan reeked a little of dirt and sweat, of bonfire, and smells

of horses and the chase; that Minnie, too, was a trifle oppressive. A bathe to her was unknown and her fine long tresses also reeked of something indefinable as did her body and her breath. But love is love for gipsy or for gentry, and you or I will never fathom its reactions.

They were well-matched; both were earnest and both were faithful and honest in intention. Can that be said for all the love-sick couples of real life or of fiction?

They lie close together now in the firelight. It is the way of an old, old world and who would alter it?

* * *

Next morning Jan and Minnie came down at dawn from Jan's caravan to find that life was beginning hard for them. The county chief of police had heard of gipsy retaliation for the prosecution of several of their clan. Jan had had no hand in this, but the Chief was "out" for more captures, and perhaps also for witnesses against Jan's father. He had sworn, too, to clear that part of the country of all Romany traces.

The local policeman had brought his sergeant and with all the authority of the law they desired to know Jan's pedigree and recent movements, the while the local policeman found the skeleton of last night's bird and stirred the pot with his stick to find the accusing contents that remained in the "scouse."

In the end Jan was held for enquiries, and later for a charge. Minnie and her mother were curtly ordered to "move on."

* * *

Maybe, dear reader, especially you of the towns have never heard of a persecuted people in this island. Mayhap though you are one of the persecutors? Romany tribes live near to nature; they don't accept our rules of *meum et tuum* in regard to nature's gifts to man; they don't pay rates nor any direct taxes and so are alien to our civilisation; they observe their own laws, and for all this accumulation of perversity, the greater law punishes them accordingly.

Minnie and her mother soon found this. As they pulled up that afternoon at a wayside green, the order to "move on" came in less than half-an-hour. They moved on, with two weary horses for two more hours, and then were moved on again. That night they turned into a private wood, crime

of all crimes, and were only discovered in the morning by an excited but more generous-hearted keeper, who gave them to 9 a.m. to clear out. Minnie had tried her hand that night at poaching, but a young rabbit injured by the horse's hoofs was her only prize, and they surreptitiously boiled it inside the caravan.

Next day was a repetition of the previous one. The Chief was carrying out his threat, and all gipsies were on the move. England is a "free" country, its common lands still stretch wide, the swards on lanes and roads are broad and ample—there is room always for an army on the march.

But it is the Romany who must march when the order goes forth, and modern telephones see to it that they don't tarry in forbidden territory. Minnie's horses stopped to graze sometimes, but not for long. They stopped to beg or if that failed to steal; but though both were crimes, the law turned a blind eye if only they obeyed the general order—and moved on!

So they trailed through Wiltshire, parts of Oxfordshire, and of Gloucestershire, into Warwickshire, but it was a period of recurring persecution such as has occurred at varying periods through the centuries. "Move on" may not seem much hardship at first sight, but it can be unutterably cruel. The modern version "No Parking Here" is kindness by comparison, but you, my reader, sometimes think it hard!

* * *

The two women were foodless now, as were the children. The latter they turned loose at times to snatch food from school-children, and more than once the kiddies stole bread, mostly by stealth, but once by rushing a shop. Still they moved on.

It would not be thought that this cruel process was pursued through the night. But it was, and when the paraffin lamps gave out, their names were taken for proceeding without lights. But these sorts of things were mere threats. The remedy was to look scarce—to "move on!" Most nights they did so and turned for safety at last into private property. They were safer trespassing.

Nearer the big towns the gipsies found the going better. Begging was easier and the takings more. They bought food of the town sort and gener-

ally found an encampment where for a fee they might stay.

* * *

As for Jan, the drums of Africa are not surer bearers of tidings than ways the gipsies have, and Minnie had heard of him. As the alleged accomplice of his father, Jan had had a like sentence, i.e., four months. It was a monstrous miscarriage of justice, but it was squire's justice and county justice, and what matter: it would keep the vagabond out of mischief and in a warm gaol all the winter!

So Jan served his time, or three months of it, and came out to look for Minnie and his people. He got a job on a winter fair-ground at ——— and here he served on the roundabouts, while awaiting the few weeks to spring and the opportunity to pursue his search.

Night after night he worked taking the pile of pennies the while the organ blared out its tunes. There was one it seemed to play most of the time. It was "Play to me, gipsy," and Jan liked it for that.

* * *

There are some sounds that stir the blood of men or beast. Scrape a saucer on the floor and the cat "goes to it"; old war-horses, it is said, prance at the sound of a bugle, and tram horses at the tinkle of a bell; His Master's Voice will stir a dog, and some music will charm the savage beast — even the mighty boss who overhears his typist humming a waltz. So with gipsies. Children of nature though they be, the hurdy-gurdy and its organ is to them second nature. It is the voice of God in winter.

* * *

Thus it was that coming to ——— Minnie heard the blare and din of the fair. So did the horses, the kiddies and Minnie's mother. Each reacted according to their kind.

Can you imagine the rest?—the old tune blaring forth? The mighty shout of greeting? The excited kids and their raid on the galloping horses? There was all this, and mother calling gipsy blessings down upon the lot of them. The roundabouts went round and round for ever as it seemed for Jan was too occupied to ask for pennies.

* * *

Let us steal away. Mother will have her hand crossed with silver many times to-night. Jan and Minnie could

now afford the best hotel in the town. But they will sleep in the caravan and the Great Destiny that guides us all will watch over them as kindly as over you and me.

The spring trek is near, and summer joy, with the grinding of wheels on the long and open road.

* * *

We'll say good-bye again. Yet stay one moment—"Oh sing to me, gipsy."

I think that's sweet.

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Hard Lines

A correspondent favours us with some hard words about the Labour Party. He writes scornfully about our "encomiastic homologation" of the bourgeois phantasmagoria of a workers' El Dorado after the war. Our "hallucinatory, supervacaneous and succedaneous propaganda" in this direction is apparently only equalled in evil by the "obliquation, hypocritical obscurantism, the homiletics and hyperorthodoxy" of the Labour leaders, who are the true subversionists and who it seems are betraying the workers to the heteronomy of the master class.

(Concluded on opposite page.)

LABOUR PARTY DIRECTORY

List of D.L.P. Alterations

The following list officially supplied continues our record of changes to date in the list of Divisional Secretaries published in the 1940 Report of the Annual Conference. It should be noticed that no distinction is made in this list between a change of secretary and a change of address. The entry is made in full in either case. (See also July and later issues.)

Index Descrip-

No.	tion	Name of Organisation	Present Secretary and Address
C37	CD	Belper D.L.P.	Mr. G. H. COWHAM, Edenwall, Flowery Leys Lane, Alfreton, Derbyshire.
F46	BD	Drake D.L.P.	Mr. F. DEACON, Room 7, 3rd Floor, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Plymouth, Devon.
G95	CD	Saffron Walden D.L.P.	Coun. S. S. WILSON, J.P., C.C., 64, Radwinter Road, Saffron Walden, Essex.
B166/75	DB	Manchester D.L.P.	Mr. E. FURNESS, Room 104, 3rd Floor, Imperial Buildings, 7, Oxford Road, Manchester, 1.
B174	BD	Rusholme D.L.P.	Mr. G. B. CHERRY, 449A, Stockport Road, Manchester, 14.
B193	CD	Heywood & Radcliffe D.L.P.	Mr. H. ASHWORTH, 49, Coomassie Street, Heywood, Lancs.
E240	BD	Hackney North D.L.P.	Miss FINCH, 67, Reighton Road, London, E.5.
E257	BD	Lewisham West D.L.P.	Mr. JACK SPENCER, 43, Sunderland Road, London, S.E.23.
E262	SB	St. Marylebone D.L.P.	Mr. G. BUTCHER, 99A, Victoria Road, Ruislip, Middlesex.
D291	CD	Brentford & Chiswick D.L.P.	Mrs. D. LOFTUS, 2, Kenilworth House, Grosvenor Road, Chiswick, London, W.4.
C404	CD	Rugby D.L.P.	Mrs. C. DOWNES, Labour Rooms, 1, Elborow Street, Rugby, Warwicks.
A421	BD	Bradford East D.L.P.	Mr. LESTER ACKROYD, 65, Upper Rushton Road, Bradford Moor, Bradford.
J518	CD	Kilmarnock L.P. & T.C.	Mr. J. DUNBAR, 3, Fairyhill Road, Kilmarnock.
J544	BD	Kelvingrove D.L.P.	Mrs. J. L. WILLIAMS, 57, White Street, Partick, Glasgow.
			DELETION
E265	BD	St. Pancras South-West D.L.P.	Mr. G. M. WOOD, 117, Paramount Court, London, W.1.



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(Concluded from opposite page.)

Well, well. This hypotyposis of our superacidulated, heteroclitic and hypochondriac comrade in arms does really tempt us to a reply in kind. Our study in heresiology is not wide but we nevertheless recognise the source of this hypostatic denegation of our leaders, and the consuetudinary predominance

of this weapon in Communist controversy. This much at any rate is ludicrously luculent. If we may contraindicate, we should, hermeneutically speaking, not take this matter with decumbence, but convolute all the homonymous language of his letter into one word—bosh!

We leave it at that.

EAST LEWISHAM

Under the Blitz

By MABEL RAISIN, Acting Secretary.

On September 1st, a few days before London was to experience her ordeal of air attack, the E.C. met to discuss the problem of personnel. The last full-time Officer had been called for National Service, leaving one voluntary member to carry on. We had completed two weeks of a successful membership Campaign, when the calm broke. Plans were made, and a decision taken that in the event of the worst happening the Officers should have full powers to act as they thought fit in the circumstances in order to keep the Party together. September 7th, the 'Blitz' on London commenced.

Lewisham, interlaced by numerous railway lines, and thickly populated, proved to be a good "military objective." And we got it! Our factories, railways, hospitals and Workers' Estates caught the attack.

Party Headquarters came in for its share. The Secretary arrived one morning to find the offices out-of-bounds. Catford had received its share of time-bombs, and whole areas had to be evacuated. Our headquarters was out of commission for some ten days.

However, the Party office opened up again. We were now anxious to find out what had happened to our membership. Lewisham was in a bad state and an evacuation had set in. Our Parliamentary Candidate, Tom Crawford, was quickly on the spot, and with the Secretary, giving advice to folk generally.

Our working-class areas had been badly hit! Morning after morning brought an ever sadder story. But we shall never forget the courage and fortitude of these folk; they were an inspiration to all of us.

Membership during 1940 had been on the decline for several reasons; the fact that we have three large London County Council and two Borough Council Housing Estates accounting for a considerable proportion of this decline. Here, the folk were mostly young, and men were called up, and then the evacuation of the wives with tiny children came. At the end of August our membership had dropped to under 3,000. We were not discouraged, but immediately set about a

new membership drive, as already mentioned in the opening paragraph.

The Executive Committee met on October 20th to consider the effect of the air attack on the Party, and it was realised that the Party had suffered badly. We were fortunate in that the Officers had been in close contact during the whole of the period, and so the normal office activities had been carried on.

The great evacuation from the Borough continued, and with collectors and Party workers one after another calling to say that they were leaving, it was clear that it was going to be hard to carry on. Some collectors had lost their records of membership together with their personal belongings; others were evacuating with their firms from London, so that the situation became extremely complicated. It became very evident that we were in for a landslide in membership.

But we decided we could not accept this situation lying down! The Executive Committee decided upon a programme of special organisational work. A great effort must be made to contact members somehow, and a letter from our Parliamentary Candidate was immediately put out by hand to the membership. During two week-ends we were able to complete this delivery, and thanks are due to the Comrades who carried out this important job.

But we looked further ahead and decided that a similar message should be put round every month, together with either the "London News" or a current Party pamphlet. And so, during December and January nearly 2,000 copies of the "London News" plus 500 copies of the Ernest Bevin pamphlet were distributed by our collectors.

Financially we have suffered considerably. Our weekly Competition profits dropped by about £4 per week, while subscriptions were now showing a decrease of about £6 per week.

At the end of January, 1941, the Secretary was able to report progress to the General Council, and at last it looked as if we had reached bottom. On membership, after a clean-up, it looked as if we should salvage something like 2,000 members. Twenty-four collectors had been appointed, and subscriptions were now taking a considerable turn for the better. The Collectors had been carefully chosen to

act also as Information Officers, thus keeping the members in close contact with the Party Office, where advice and help could be given to those needing it. This part of the organisation was now functioning well; indeed, several new members have been enrolled during 1941 from the efforts of these Comrades.

A great deal of enthusiasm exists in the Party in East Lewisham and at the recent General Council meeting held the Secretary was instructed to prepare for a Members' Social Evening to be held sometime during May.

What the future holds no one can foresee; if new ordeals have to be faced we are confident that our Party will meet and triumph over them.

We intend to spare no effort to ensure the maintenance of Party membership, for this we deem the most important function we can pursue for the furtherance of the great Labour Movement.

Many good comrades lost their lives during the period under review, and it will not be easy to fill their places. We shall try to remember them always as the folk who stood side by side with us during those days of Peace when many important 'battles' of the ballot box were fought; and who gave of themselves so unselfishly that Labour might triumph in the days ahead.

"With heads uncovered swear we all. . . ."

A Question

Question: I am acting temporarily for the war-emergency as Branch Secretary of the N.U.G.M.W., and during my efforts to get men employed at war camps in the Division into the Union have interested myself in the organisation of roadmen. Three months ago there were roughly 15 men in the Union in one district and now there are 165 out of 206 in all parts of the county. As you may be aware Secretaries of Branches are paid 10 per cent. commission as salary.

As a member of the County Council Committee which deals with rates of pay, etc., of roadmen, I intervened last Friday to speak against a motion confirming the action of our County Surveyor. The Clerk of the Council got up to ask what right had I to speak in the discussion as I was the Branch Secretary. I questioned him as to his

authority, but he did not reply, but the opposition members took advantage and asked the same question. Some of my colleagues intervened to support me and then the Clerk stated that I should have signed a declaration. To this I reminded him that I was not interested in any contract with the Council. However, the Chairman of the Council himself enquired about the declaration and whether so and so ought not to sign it and asked the Clerk whether he had brought the matter to my notice.

What is your esteemed opinion on the matter? Have I a right to speak and must I sign a declaration? Could you help me with any authority on the subject?

Answer: We are of the opinion that our friend is in the right and that there is no authority whatever which requires him to make a declaration or to abstain from speaking or voting on the matter mentioned. The question is governed by Section 76 of the Local Government Act, 1933. The relevant provisions for which are as follow:—

"(1) If a member of a local authority has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any contract or proposed contract or other matter, and is present at a meeting of the local authority at which the contract or other matter is the subject of consideration, he shall at the meeting, as soon as practicable after the commencement thereof, disclose the fact, and shall not take part in the consideration or discussion of, or vote on any question with respect to, the contract or other matter:

Provided that this section shall not apply to an interest in a contract or other matter which a member may have as a ratepayer or inhabitant of the area, or as an ordinary consumer of gas, electricity, or water, or to an interest in any matter relating to the terms on which the right to participate in any service, including the supply of goods, is offered to the public.

(2) For the purposes of this section a person shall (subject as hereinafter in this sub-section provided) be treated as having indirectly a pecuniary interest in a contract or other matter, if—

(a) he or any nominee of his is a member of a company or other body with which the contract is made or is proposed to be made or which has a direct pecuniary interest in the other matter under consideration; or

(b) he is a partner, or is in the em-

ployment, of a person with whom the contract is made or is proposed to be made or who has a direct pecuniary interest in the other matter under consideration:

Provided that—

(i) this sub-section shall not apply to membership of, or employment under, any public body;

(ii) a member of a company or other body shall not, by reason only of his membership, be treated as being so interested if he has no beneficial interest in any shares or stock of that company or other body."

It will be seen that the whole matter turns upon the question of pecuniary interest, and it is well to observe that the term "or other body" used in clause (a) of Sub-section 2 may apply to a Trade Union.

We have yet to learn that a Trade Union Secretary can be held to have a direct pecuniary interest in the contracts made between his members and a local authority. The whole weight of commonsense is against such a suggestion, nor indeed can it be upheld that a Trade Union branch secretary is in the employment (see clause b) of the person with whom the contract is made, presuming such person or persons to be employees of the Council.

There is an important case bearing on this matter, and although it was decided upon the earlier Act of 1894, it seems to govern the principles here involved.

This is the case of *Lapish v. Braithwaite* (House of Lords). In this case Mr. Braithwaite was the managing director of a company and he took part in the business of a city council while certain contracts existed between the corporation and the company of which he was managing director. It was alleged that he acted while disqualified.

After a decision in the lower Courts which found him disqualified, the matter was taken to the Court of Appeal and to the House of Lords and both the latter Courts held that Mr. Braithwaite was not disqualified.

In giving judgment, their Lordships held that a managing director is the servant of his company; and while he is naturally concerned in negotiating and carrying out his company's contracts, he has (if he is paid by a fixed salary and not by a percentage) no interest whether direct or indirect in the contracts themselves.

The above case seems to us to finally dispose of the Clerk's contention.

OBITUARY

MRS. AGNES LAUDER, J.P.

We deeply regret to announce the death of Mrs. Agnes Lauder, Scottish Women's Organiser, which took place after a long illness early in February.

We trust our readers have seen the fine appreciation of Mrs. Lauder by Miss Mary Sutherland, J.P., which appeared in the issue of "Forward" for 8th February.

Miss Sutherland pays tribute to the dignity of character, independence of mind and pride in a job well done which distinguished Mrs. Lauder and, after recounting the long story of her service to the workers, commencing at the age of 16, Miss Sutherland recalls that for nearly 18 years Mrs. Lauder had been one of her closest friends and, indeed, she had shared their home from 1923 to 1932.

Miss Sutherland says "Her warm-hearted hospitality was typical of Glasgow, but the wonderfully-attractive thing about her was her great hospitality of spirit—her generous, eager interest in other people's work and ideas, which won her friends wherever she went, and on any committee of which she was a member.

"She was one of the most genuinely public-spirited people I have known. The slump of the post-war years hit her own home very hard, but the hundreds of people who came to her door asking for advice or help would never have guessed that.

"She was an excellent committee worker, both inside the Movement and on public bodies, always practical in her suggestions and wise in her judgments. . . .

"And she will remain in our memories, as she lived with us, 'among the very brave, the very true'."

TO READERS

We regret that pressure on our space this month compels us to hold over the list of subscribers to our appeal. This will appear next month.